

***Amendments to the Claims***

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings of claims in the application.

1. (Currently Amended) A method for providing rich media content to a user over a computer network, comprising the steps of:

determining the user's ability to playback said rich media content locally,  
wherein said determining step is automatic and transparent and requires no request by the  
user for said rich media content;

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providing the user with a version of said rich media content appropriate for said user's ability to playback said rich media content locally, said version of said rich media content comprising a rich media file;

loading said rich media content-file into a local cache of the user; and  
displaying said rich media content from the user's local cache after said rich media content-file has been completely loaded.

2. (Canceled)

3. (Original) A method according to claim 1, wherein said providing step is transparent to the user.

4. (Original) A method according to claim 1, wherein said loading step is transparent to the user.

5. (Canceled)

6. (Original) A method according to claim 1, wherein said providing step is automatic and requires no initiation by the user.

7. (Original) A method according to claim 1, wherein said loading step is automatic and requires no initiation by the user.

8. (Original) A method according to claim 1, wherein said displaying step is automatic and requires no initiation by the user.

9. (Original) A method according to claim 1, wherein said determining step comprises the step of progressing through a set of preferred rich media content playback applications to assess the user's ability to playback said rich media content locally.

10. (Original) A method according to claim 1, wherein said providing step comprises the step of generating a script for said rich media content compatible with the user's ability to playback said rich media content locally.

11. (Original) A method according to claim 1, wherein said providing step further comprises the step of selecting said appropriate version of said rich media content from a set of available versions of said rich media content.

12. (Original) A method according to claim 1, wherein said displaying step comprises the step of displaying said rich media content in a designated display area on a local display of the user's.

13. (Original) A method according to claim 12, wherein said designated display area includes controls for manipulating said rich media content.

14. (Original) A method according to claim 1, wherein said rich media content comprises a video clip.

15. (Original) A method according to claim 14, wherein said video clip is up to 15 seconds long.

16. (Original) A method according to claim 1, wherein said rich media content comprises an advertisement.

17. (Original) A method according to claim 1, wherein said rich media content is provided to the user as a highly compressed digital file.

18. (Original) A method according to claim 1, further comprising the step of:  
enabling the user to forward said rich media content to another user on the computer network.

19. (Original) A method according to claim 18, wherein the user is encouraged to forward said rich media content to another user.

20. (Currently Amended) A method according to claim 1, wherein the user's local cache resides on a desktop computer ~~connected~~ connected to the computer network.

21. (Original) A method according to claim 1, wherein the user's local cache resides on a laptop computer connected to the computer network.

22. (Original) A method according to claim 1, wherein the user's local cache resides on a handheld device connected to the computer network.

23. (Original) A method according to claim 1, wherein the user's local cache resides on a telephone connected to the computer network.

24. (Original) A method according to claim 1, wherein the user's local cache resides on a set top box connected to the computer network.

25. (Original) A method according to claim 1, wherein the user's local cache resides on an Internet appliance connected to the computer network.

26. (Original) A method according to claim 1, wherein said providing step comprises providing said rich media content to the user over a wireless computer network.

27. (Currently Amended) A system for providing rich media content to a user over a computer network, comprising:

(a) means for determining the user's ability to playback said rich media content locally, without a request by the user for said rich media content;

(b) means for providing the user with a version of said rich media content appropriate for the user's local playback capabilities, said version of said rich media content comprising a rich media file;

(c) means for loading said rich media content file into a local cache of the user; and

(d) means for displaying said rich media content from the user's local cache after said rich media content file has been completely loaded.

28. (Currently Amended) A system for providing rich media content to a user over a computer network, comprising:

(a) means for determining the user's ability to playback said rich media content locally, without a request by the user for said rich media content;

(b) means for providing the user with a version of said rich media content appropriate for the user's local playback capabilities, said version of said rich media content comprising a rich media file capable of being loaded into a local cache of the user and displayed from the user's local cache after said rich media content file has been completely loaded.

29. (Currently Amended) A computer program product, comprising a computer useable medium having computer program logic stored therein, wherein said computer program logic enables a computer to provide rich media content to a user over a computer network comprising:

(a) means for determining the user's ability to playback said rich media content locally, without a request by the user for said rich media content;

(b) means for providing the user with a version of said rich media content appropriate for the user's local playback capabilities, said version of said rich media content comprising a rich media file;

(c) means for loading said rich media content-file into a local cache of the user; and

(d) means for displaying said rich media content from the user's local cache after said rich media content-file has been completely loaded.

30. (Currently Amended) A method for providing short, highly compressed rich media content to a user over a computer network, comprising the steps of:

(a) automatically and transparently determining the user's ability to playback said rich media content locally, without a request by the user for said rich media content;

(b) automatically and transparently providing the user with a version of said rich media content appropriate for the user's local playback capabilities, said version of said rich media content comprising a rich media file;

(c) automatically and transparently loading said rich media content-file into a local cache of the user;

(d) automatically displaying in a designated display area on the user's local display said rich media content from the user's local cache after said rich media content-file has been completely loaded; and

(e) enabling the user to forward said rich media content to another user.

31. (New) A method for automatically displaying rich media content to a user over a computer network, comprising the steps of:

determining the user's ability to playback said rich media content locally;

comparing said ability to playback said rich media content locally against a predefined schedule of rich media file formats available on said network for said rich media content, wherein said schedule comprises a preference ranking of said rich media file formats available on said network for said rich media content; and

selecting a version of said rich media content appropriate for said user's ability to playback said rich media content locally, said version of said rich media content comprising a rich media file, wherein the format of said rich media file is the highest ranked of said rich media file formats available on said network for said rich media content that matched said ability to playback said rich media content locally during said comparing step.

32. (New) The method of claim 31, further comprising the steps of:

loading said rich media file into a local cache of the user; and  
displaying said rich media content from the user's local cache after said rich media file has been completely loaded.

33. (New) The method of claim 31, wherein in the event that none of said rich media file formats available on said network matched said ability to playback said rich media content locally during said comparing step, said rich media content is not displayed to said user.

34. (New) The method of claim 31, wherein said determining step further comprises progressing through a set of preferred rich media content playback applications.